

Two Ways of Living East of Eden – *Genesis 4:16-26*

Introduction – Throughout the Book of Genesis we see this primary theme of the Antithesis and the promise of Gen 3:15. The prophecy has already been (or begun to be) fulfilled in the murder of righteous Abel by the ungodly Cain. This passage continues to demonstrate the ongoing struggle of these two lines, these two ways of living. One way bemoans, denies, de-emphasizes and even rejects the presence of the Lord and the other humbly acknowledges, fears, and delights in the presence of the Lord. This section begs the question: “Who’s side are you on?”

Overview of the Passage – Cain’s encounter with God is finished and we never hear of God speaking with Cain again. While Adam had to be driven from the garden, Cain “*went out from the presence of the Lord*” (v16). Adam and Eve had been driven east of Eden, and Cain goes out even further. He goes to a place of nomadic wandering (Nod), typifying what all life which refuses to be in the presence of God is like. No truth. No foundation. Nothing but self and self-justification.

Cain has a wife which suggests many decades have gone by since Adam’s fall. He names his son “*Enoch*” and “*dedicates*” the first recorded city after this man-child. In defiance to God, Cain builds a city in the land of wandering, the city of Man. There are seven generations from Adam to Lamech and we come to a fulfillment, a completion, of the perversion of a line that lives outside the presence of God.

Another way to look at this is there are seven generations from Cain to the sons of Lamech. They come from his two wives and bigamy is the first perversion of the marriage bed as God established. Although the scriptures never condemn the patriarchs for practicing polygamy, it is utterly transparent that such practices result in painful, destructive practices – women treated as property and symbols of wealth and power, harems filled with envy and neglect, sibling rivalries and fatherlessness. Nevertheless, there are sons born with successful callings. Jabel “replaces” Abel dealing with livestock, Jubal is the father of musical instruments, and Tubal-Cain is a craftsmen in metals.

But we are known by our fruit (Luke 6:44) and the “*Song of the Sword*” is telling of this line (vv23-24). The first poem-song lauded the beauty, glory, and purpose of a woman and womanhood. (Gen 2:23-25). Lamech’s song is a woman’s worst dream. Not only do they suffer the humiliation of their polygamous relationship, their husband is a brutal, violent, vengeful murderer. Wounded, and by a young lad, Lamech boasts in having a reputation of avenging himself, not by the Lord sevenfold, but by his own hands seventy-sevenfold, a twisted sign justifying his violence.

In simple but stark contrast, we are given the short story of another line (vv25-26). 130 years after creation (Gen 5:3), Eve gives birth to another son, Seth. Once again a “seed” has been provided because of the promise (3:15). Seth has a son and names him “Enosh” which means “weak/faint one,” perhaps signifying man in his moral and physical condition now in the fall, a contrast to the boastful pride of the Cainites. This line, then, begins to “*call on the name of the LORD.*” That is, they begin to proclaim the character and plan of Yahweh, the covenant God, the God who would provide a way to crush the seed of the serpent. Do the math, and you will see that Enosh will be alive when Noah is born (Gen 5, and 5:29). Luther commented that the wording “name of the Lord” referred ultimately to Jesus Christ, and thus Enosh exhorted the people to look toward their redemption.

Better Than the Blood of Abel – The line of Seth leads to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to David, and finally to Jesus (Luke 3:23-38). The blood from this line speaks better things through Jesus than the blood of Abel (Heb 12:24). Even from the beginning, and especially as Israel is established, God wanted all to understand that Israel had this unique identity. God had mercifully chosen a special people, a seed that would bring forth the Seed (Gal 3:16), who would be the Deliverer from that place where people were not and could not be in “*the presence of the LORD.*”

The Gift of Image-Bearing – We learn quite a bit about the gifts and callings, common blessings and responsibilities given to all mankind, even those who are not in the “*presence of the LORD.*” Image-bearing is a powerful gift, even for those who have deeply marred that image. As image-bearers, they remain male and female, made to bring forth children for generations to fill the earth and subdue it. They are creators, like God, made to go out into the world and take dominion, ruling over the animal world and the fields of the earth, making beautiful music, and building tools and cities for dwelling, community, and protection. This is why we can see such successful innovations, discoveries, inventions, and good and beautiful treasures from those who do not worship God. This can be very alluring to those not deeply rooted in the grace of God, who may not think it is that important to walk with God to be successful, satisfied, and happy.

However, when these things are not rooted in the home we were meant to dwell and the foundation from which we can do all things to the glory of God, we eventually twist and pervert these gifts to satisfy our bent, selfish hearts. We destroy marriage and the marriage bed, we envy, covet, and steal, we lie and cheat, we crush and murder in revenge, we exploit and discard the weaker. Cities built and founded upon arrogance result in violence and ultimately destruction. History is littered with such empires and self-glory seekers. The Psalmist speaks of the ungodly who give their name to their works and pass off the scene like mist into final judgment (Psalm 49:10-12).

The City of God, the City of Man – There is the line of Cain and the line of Seth. There is the division of the godly/ungodly in the world, believers and unbelievers. Proverbs speaks of the righteous and the wicked, Jesus speaks of the sheep and the goats. In the Old Covenant there was the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the people of God and the people of the world. There are Christians and there are non-Christians. The question for you is who are your people? With whom do you identify? There are only two groups, two lines; there are no other options.

If you are in Christ, that is, if you believe in Him, if you love Him, if you have been baptized in His name, then you are God's chosen seed. You are the seed of the woman, and you have been appointed by God to wage war against the seed of the dragon; that is your calling. You are part of the chosen nation (1 Pet 2:9) and notice, "*to proclaim the praises of Him...*" as happened in the days of Enosh. This is the calling given to the church (Rom 16:20). And while the first city was built by evil Cain, the final estate of the redeemed is described in terms of God's city, the "*Holy City, the New Jerusalem*" (Rev 21:2).

Warnings: There are those who are objectively here with the people of God but do not love Him, do not treasure Him, are not seeking to be more faithful. They say they love God but don't keep His commandments. They say they love God, but they hate their brother. They are hypocrites. Then there are those who will not associate with Christians because of the hypocrisy. But don't let hypocrites keep you further from Jesus, He doesn't like hypocrites either (Matt 23, 1 John 3:7-15). Paul said that not all Israel is Israel and being in a garage doesn't make you a car.

The Defining Characteristic of the Line of Seth – They call upon the name of the Lord. They proclaim His greatness, His lordship. They bow the knee in humble submission and worship with reverent fear. They walk in the joy of the Lord. They become more and more like God because they worship God. They believe what God says about the destructiveness of sin and so they live lives of repentance, confession, and experience the deep forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ.